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Union—Peace—Popular Rights.

SPEECH

OF

EDWARD JOY MORRIS,

OF PENNSYLVANIA,

In the U. S. House of Representatives, January 30, 1861.

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The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty three—

Mr. MORRIS, of Pennsylvania, said:

Mr. SPEAKER: Great as are the perils by which the Union is surrounded, I cannot permit myself to believe that they are insurmountable, unless we are destitute of the virtues to which it owes its origin. I trust that we are not so much estranged by sectional animosities as to be unable to agree on some plan of conciliation for the preservation of the Union. Convinced as I am, that there is no just cause for the present troubles, and least of all in the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency, I am nevertheless, disposed to assent to any honorable plan of settlement which shall secure permanent peace between the two great sections of the country.

Our ancestors deemed no sacrifices too great to secure the Union of the States under the present form of government. When the constitutional convention met, it was found that the interests of the free and slave States were conflicting, and that, unless mutual concession was made, a united Government could not be established. Commerce was the great interest of the Northern States, and slave labor that of the Southern States. Under the then existing confederation, each State had its own commercial regulations, which rendered them as foreign one to the other, for the purposes of trade, as were the kingdoms of Europe to them all. The removal of these obstacles to commercial intercourse was one of the chief causes which influenced the people of the seaboard States of the North in favor of Union. If the exclusive power to regulate commerce could be assigned to Congress, the prosperity of these States would be secured beyond doubt.

When this question came up for consideration, the members from the Southern States refused to entertain it unless a reciprocal concession should be made to their interests. Mr. Rutledge expressed his willingness to support the clause giving Congress power over commerce, on condition that the subsequent clause, that "Congress shall pass no law prohibiting the immigration or importation of" negroes, should also be agreed to. Mr. Charles Pinckney said:

"The power of regulating commerce is a pure concession on the part of the Southern States."

Mr. C. C. Pinckney said:

"It is the true interest of the Southern States to have no regulation of commerce."

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An issue was thus directly made between the commercial interests of the North and the labor interests of the South. Mr. Pinckney said:

"South Carolina can never receive the plan, if it prohibits the slave trade."

Mr. Rutledge, of South Carolina, said:

"If the convention thinks that North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, will ever agree to the plan, unless their right to import slaves be untouched, the expectation is vain."

Mr. G. Morris, of Pennsylvania, proposed to recommit the clauses relating to taxes on exports, and to a navigation act, "with a view to a bargain between the Northern and Southern States." Mr. Ellsworth, of Connecticut, in the same spirit of compromise, said:

"Let every State import what it pleases. The morality or wisdom of slavery are considerations belonging to the States themselves. What enriches a part enriches the whole; and the States are the best judges of their particular interest."

Mr. Sherman, of the same State, said:

"He disapproved of the slave trade; but did not think the public good required that the proposed scheme of government should interfere with the rights of the States to import slaves. It was better to let the Southern States import slaves than to part with them, if they made that a *sine qua non*."

This struggle led to a compromise between the North and South, by which the former gained for Congress exclusive power over commerce, and the latter the toleration of the African slave trade for twenty-one years—to 1808. The rapid growth and present extension of slavery in the United States is chiefly owing to the importation of slaves during this period. At no subsequent time has slavery increased at such a ratio as between 1787 and 1808, as is demonstrated by the following table of the progress of the slave population from 1789 to 1850, showing the increase per cent. in each period of ten years:

	North Carolina.	*South Carolina.*	*Georgia.*
1790 to 1800	32.52	36.46	102.99
1800 to 1810	26 65	34.45	77 12
1810 to 1820	21.43	31.62	42 33
1820 to 1830	19.79	22.62	45.35
1830 to 1840	0 08	3.68	29.15
1840 to 1850	17.38	17.71	35.85

The part of the compromise relating to the slave trade was adopted by the votes of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia—*ay*, 7. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia—*no*, 4. Mr. Madison foresaw the evils to result from the extension of the slave trade, and he is reported as saying, in the convention, that twenty years would produce all the mischief apprehended from the slave trade. The necessity for union, however, was so pressing, and such vital interests were at stake on its adoption, that the New England States, where the hostility to slavery has always been the strongest, were willing to render certain its permanent establishment in the country, rather than risk the loss of the Union.

I refer, Mr. Speaker, to this passage in our history, to show of what importance was a Union of the States in the estimation of our ancestors, and to what extremes they were willing to go to secure it. If, sir, I now avow that I am willing to make all reasonable compromise and concession for the maintenance of the Union, I am only following the example of the wise men who framed the Constitution of the United States. Had they refused to compromise antagonistic views and interests, the Union could not have been formed. In my opinion, if we obstinately resist the adoption of conciliatory measures, the Union stands in imminent danger of dissolution. I know, sir, that in urging this policy, I shall run counter to the prejudices of those who regulate their

action exclusively by party platforms, and not by the interests of the country. For my part, I will never subordinate the existence of the Republic to the behests of party, or the *dicta* of mere politicians, who would rather see the Union perish than deviate a point from the party creed. The voice of the country, in this hour of extreme peril, rises above the clamor of contending factions, and appeals to us with an impressive emphasis that no man with a patriotic heart can resist. That summons I obey; and, regardless of personal consequences, I shall pursue what I deem to be the path of duty and honor.

I need hardly say, sir, that I have no sympathy with the assumed right of secession. It has no justification in fact or constitutional construction. Our ancestors had gone through the experimental trials of colonial confederations, the continental Congress, and a confederation of sovereign States, and they had found them all unavailable for the purposes of a solid, substantial Union, and a grand permanent Government. After all these trials, they came to the conclusion that it was necessary for the States to surrender a part of their independence, for the purpose of obtaining the protection of a General Government, which should represent the aggregated States to the world as a political unit. This object was attained in the Constitution of the United States.

In the Articles of Confederation, each State (see art. 2) retained its sovereignty. In the Constitution no such reservation is made. The former system was a league of States for mutual defence and welfare. It was intended to operate on the States as such, and not on individuals. The latter is not a Government of the States, but of the people. Article three of the Articles of Confederation says:

"The said *States* hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other," &c.

The preamble of the Constitution says:

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Formed by the people, the whole people, of the United States, its existence is dependent on them, and not on the States; and it can only be dissolved by the power that gave it birth; States may pass ordinances of secession, but they cannot overthrow the fabric erected by the source of all political authority in this country—the people.

The imbecility of the Confederation was owing to its dependence on the States, the assent of nine being requisite to carry into effect the most important powers of Congress. Until this assent was obtained, money could not be borrowed or appropriated, war could not be declared, treaties formed, nor money coined. In an important crisis, when the fate of the nation might depend on the prompt and independent action of the central Government, it was in the power of a single State to arrest its movement. The perils of such a dependence were so great, and the want of power for all practical purposes so evident, that a strong, self-sustaining national Government could not be said to exist. In order to establish such a Government, the Constitution rendered the Federal Government independent of State control, and capable of executing its own decrees. It expressly declares, in section two, article six, that—

"This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made or which shall be made under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land, and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding."

It is absurd to attempt to justify secession by the Constitution, when that instrument is made the supreme law of the land, and the executive and judicial officers of

the States, as well as the Legislatures thereof, are bound by oath to regard and obey it as such. Its action cannot be arrested by State authority; and the States are subordinate powers. If any one State could obstruct its operations, the purposes of the Union would be frustrated, and the Federal Government would be shorn of its legitimate power, and reduced to a condition of vassalage to the States. Its laws could not be supreme if they could be set at defiance by the States. To admit the supremacy of the Federal power, and to claim for the States the right to control or override it, is so glaring an absurdity, that it needs only to be stated to be admitted. The States are expressly restrained by the Constitution from invading the sphere of the Federal Government, or usurping its functions:

"No State shall, without the consent of Congress, lay any duty of tonnage, keep troops or ships-of-war in time of peace, enter into any agreement or compact with another State, or with a foreign Power, or engage in war, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent danger as will not admit of delay."—*Sec.* 10, *Art.* 1.

The Constitution was intended to form "a more perfect Union" than the Confederation, the chief defect of which was the paralyzing power of the States over the General Government. If secession and nullification are to be tolerated, instead of being "a more perfect Union," it will be more impotent than the Confederation itself. The present Constitution was not limited in duration, or its existence put at the mercy of any inferior authority, but it was made for all time to come—in the words of the preamble—"for ourselves and our posterity." No State can withdraw from the Confederacy without violating the plain intent of the Constitution, and committing a most flagrant breach of faith. Having embarked our fortunes in a common bottom, any State which breaks the Union jeopardizes the welfare of the whole fraternity of sister States, and justifies armed resistance on their part for the preservation of the Union. Secession is nothing else than a declaration of war against the Union; and if it is met by a hostile response from the Federal Government, the plotters of treason must be held for the consequences.

It would be strange, indeed, if the United States alone, of all the Governments that have flourished from the beginning of history, had not a right to defend its own existence. The right which every man has to protect his own life, is denied to it. It must permit the forts, arsenals, and navy yards, the property of the nation, and designed for the protection of the people of *all* the States, to be plundered and perverted to the uses of separate States, without making an effort to prevent this wholesale spoliation. If the Capitol of the Republic is menaced by an armed invasion of traitors, the regular army cannot be summoned to its defence without wounding the sensibilities of these pseudo-patriots, who seem to look upon the Federal Government as having no individuality whatsoever, and as existing only at the will of the States, any one of which may defy its authority, and plunder its property with impunity. If such ideas be correct, then the Federal Government is no Government at all, for it wants the first element of a Government—the power to repel aggression, and vindicate its dignity and independence. It lives by sufferance; and cannot be relied on, if such reasoning be true, to protect either the lives or properties of those who live under it. It has the outward form and features of a Government; but it is a lifeless skeleton—a mere image of political vigor.

Such was not the kind of Government our ancestors aimed to establish, or they would have remained satisfied with the feeble systems it supplanted. Experience had taught them that they could neither attain a respectable position among the nations of the world, nor secure prosperity and security at home, but through the instrumentality of a strong Government. For this reason, the Executive was invested with an authority, almost equal to that of some of the sovereigns of constitutional monarchies,

and the States surrendered to the Federal Government their most cherished prerogatives. They never dreamed that the Government they constructed could be reduced to such a helpless condition as that in which the advocates of secession seek to place the Federal Government, bound hand and foot, without the power to ward off the blows directed against it. It may be coerced into subordination to the purposes of the States, but it cannot enforce its authority according to the forms of the Constitution. It must submit to every sort of outrage in silence, and with a meek and patient spirit, however grievous the wrong perpetrated, or contemptible the assailant. It must consent to its own degradation, and to the dishonor of the American name, and to the destruction of every semblance of American nationality; and all because one or more States, under the inspiration of a depraved political ambition, seek its destruction for their own disloyal and selfish purposes. If all this be so, Mr. Speaker, the career of this Government is at an end; it has ceased to have any vital power; and the sooner it is abolished in name, as it is in reality, the better.

But, sir, I cannot believe that the people of the United States are ready for the sacrifice of this, the best system of national Government ever devised by human wisdom. Its voluntary overthrow by the American people would be the greatest national suicide ever committed; it would be an act of political insanity without a parallel. Had it redounded to our injury, had it cramped the energies, fettered the growth, and obstructed the moral and material progress of the nation, there might be some excuse for the frenzied hostility lately manifested against it. But when on the contrary, it has done more for the people who have lived under it than any other Government since the origin of history, making us at the same time the freest and most prosperous people on the face of the earth, and in less than the average term of human life raising us to the front rank of nations, its destruction cannot otherwise be regarded than as an act of supreme madness and folly. A people who would willingly tear down such a Government, or consent to its overthrow, are not worthy of liberty, for they would manifest themselves incapable of appreciating its enjoyment under its best form. They would have lost that passion for constitutional liberty to which the Government owes its origin, and which marked the history of our ancestors, whose sacrifices in the sacred cause of human rights have never been surpassed in any age or country. If the American Constitution is now to perish, it cannot be said of it that it owed its ruin to its failure as a political system, for history will record that its success was perfect. Such was its success that it revolutionized the world by the force of its example, and gave an impulse to the cause of freedom that will be felt to the remotest period of time. Great will be the crime of those who are implicated in the overthrow of such a beneficent Government, the source of precious blessings to themselves and the world, the great political light of the age, the ark in which rest the hopes of mankind. Amid its ruins, in darkness and despair, they will bemoan their own infatuation, and heap curses on the heads of the wicked men who undermined the edifice of American liberty.

We are told, sir, however, in a melo-dramatic style, that this is a contest between liberty and despotism—the latter being represented by the Federal Government, and the former by the seceding States. For my part, I have always understood that the Constitution of the United States was the concentration of all the elements of liberty scattered throughout the constitutions of ancient and modern Governments; that it was the very essence of well-regulated, popular liberty. To image this, the fundamental idea of the Constitution, we are soon to crown this magnificent structure that is rising above our heads with the statue of Liberty. Before we have raised this embodiment of American political sentiment, we are told that we worship at a false

shrine; that the Government which we owe to the valor and wisdom of the great men of the Revolution is not worthy of our affections; that it is an engine of tyranny and oppression. It may be, sir, that both the world and ourselves have been deceived as to the real character of this Government, and that all the prodigies ascribed to it are due to some other cause; but if it be so, it will be the most astonishing hallucination that ever infected the mind of man. I rather think that they are laboring under a mental blindness who cannot see and acknowledge what all the world is conscious of. It is not the first time that the names of things have been perverted; that good has been made bad, and bad good; that liberty has been called despotism, and despotism liberty. The proceedings in the seceding States do not certainly show much respect for law and order, the bases on which rest all liberty. The hanging of men on suspicion, and at the hue and cry of an excited multitude; the tarring and feathering of others on secret denunciation, and without any show of justice; the seizure and plunder of the Federal forts and arsenals do not look like the acts of men who have learned to respect the rights and property of others, and to submit to the restraints of law. They rather indicate a disposition to set up passion in place of reason; to install mob violence in the place of judicial justice; and to trample down the first principles of political liberty.

What has the Federal Government done to justify these assaults on its existence? Has it proved false to its obligations? Has it invaded the rights of the States, or used its powers oppressively and to the injury of the people of the seceding States? No allegation of this kind is made; and in vain may we seek for any provocation on its part. A fugitive slave law has been enacted, the stringent provisions of which fulfill every requirement of the Constitution. It has in every case been successfully enforced, though often at great expense, and at the point of the bayonet. Repugnant as it is to the feelings of a large proportion of the people of the North, it has been submitted to, and no slave has been wrested from the grasp of Federal authority. The invasion of a slave State for the purpose of exciting a servile insurrection was promptly put down by Federal troops; and the whole military and naval power of the Republic would be employed to suppress such movements in the slave States. Slavery, as it exists in the States, enjoys a guarantee under the Federal Constitution such as it can receive from no other source. With its destruction, the institution of slavery will receive a shock that must seriously affect the value of slave property; impairing, as it will, its security, by the loss of the powerful protection it once enjoyed. In the event of a division of the free and slave States into two separate confederations, slaves escaping from the latter into the former would not be restored. This would lead to great losses, as the certainty of freedom would constantly stimulate them to flight into the free States.

Disunion, sooner or later, through one means or another, would lead to the ruin of the slave States. They would be surrounded on all sides by free States; for, it is not to be supposed that Mexico would ever join a slave State confederation after having abolished slavery on its own soil. Slave labor could not thus be transported from the exhausted lands of the cotton States to contiguous regions fresh in soil and of congenial productions. The slave States now form part of a Government which commands the respect of the world by its power and its energy and its free institutions. An exclusively slave State confederacy would constitute an exception to all other Governments in this age of the world. It would not enlist the sympathies of the leading States of Europe, averse, as they are known to be, to the extension, and existence even, of negro slavery. It could not be formidable in power, owing to the division of its population into free and slave, the latter in all probability preponderating. Being

almost exclusively a planting and agricultural community, it would want that diversity of pursuits and interests which make a nation rich and powerful. It could not have within itself all the elements of material independence, as the United States now possesses, and which enable it to treat on a footing of equality with other leading nations. It would necessarily occupy a dependent and inferior position among the community of nations. Its citizens would not, consequently, be animated by that national pride that naturally belongs to the members of a first class power, like that of the United States of North America; nor would they enjoy such a protection as that which is derived from a Government whose power is known and feared throughout the world.

In an economical point of view, the advantages of secession are yet less discernible. The Government of the United States is the cheapest in the world, and carried on with less expense than any other, to its people. Supported almost entirely by the revenue from customs, it imposes no perceptible burdens on the people. It is, indeed, sir, next to impossible for any one to say how much he contributes to the support of the Federal Government. Were the average revenue of $60,000,000 derived from customs divided among the whole population, it would only amount to a tax of two dollars per head. For all this, the citizen receives the protection of a Government whose flag is honored and respected in the most remote regions of the world. For this light burden—if, indeed, it be actually imposed on him at all—he is entitled to have the whole military and naval force of the country arrayed in his defence or for the redress of his wrongs, no matter in what distant quarter of the globe he may have suffered insult, outrage, or pecuniary spoliation, from other Powers. The title of American citizen, at the present day, wherever asserted, in the semi-barbarous kingdoms of the East, or among the Christian States of Europe, secures for him who bears it an immunity from wrong equal to that which the title of Roman citizen carried with it when the ancient mistress of the world was at the height of her power and glory. Are the people of the seceding States—I mean, sir, the people, not the venal and selfish politicians—ready to sacrifice the privilege of citizenship of this great Republic, with all its appurtenant prerogatives, and to sink into citizens of a small and feeble confederacy? Are they ready to surrender the stars and stripes, with all the hallowed traditions that surround them, and to supplant that standard of freedom and victory with one unknown to fame, and which never can secure for itself that moral power which, like a halo, envelopes the flag of the Union? I cannot believe that all pride in our past history, and in our present position as chief among the nations, exerting the greatest influence on the fortunes of the human family, is extinguished among the people of the cotton States. I choose rather, sir, to believe that the heart of the genuine people there is yet sound, and that American patriotism burns in their hearts with as pure a flame as ever. They may be deceived for a time by unscrupulous politicians, and be involved in the meshes of intrigue to such a degree that it may be difficult for them to extricate themselves; but, sooner or later, when they realize the folly of the experiment they have been induced to make by corrupt political leaders, their loyalty to the Union will revive in all its original intensity.

If free trade is to be the policy of the secession government, after it shall have dispensed with the provisional adoption of the Constitution of the United States, and established a new and permanent system, direct taxation must be the only means of government support. From this source alone must the army and navy expenditures be sustained, and they will cost at least, per annum, fifteen or twenty million dollars. Then, there will be the heavy cost of the civil list, and the diplomatic establishment, &c., making in all, for a mixed population of white and black of little more than four

million, an annual expenditure of at least $30,000 000. All this must be raised by a capitation and property tax, affecting alike the rich and the poor, and reaching the pockets of every man, however humble in condition and poor in means. Men who have lived under the Government of the United States, participating in all its invaluable privileges, and its stimulating influence on individual and national prosperity, without the consciousness of being taxed for its support, will not long remain contented under an expensive system like that proposed in the cotton States, the burdens of which will rest oppressively on every man's shoulders in the community. They will not fail to institute unfavorable comparisons between the economical Government which their political leaders assumed to renounce in their name, but without their express authority, and that under which they are so heavily taxed. The great revolutions have arisen from this very cause, and many a strong-set throne and ancient political system has been suddenly overturned by a people vexed and harassed by the burdensome taxation of an extravagant and costly Government. When a man finds that the hard-earned fruits of his industry are seriously encroached on by his rulers, and that he is obliged to surrender to the Government what is necessary to the comfort and independence of his family, a spirit of discontent is kindled in the general mass of the community, which, when least expected, breaks forth with volcanic fury, carrying desolation and destruction before it, and uprooting everything in its path.

To guard against these discontents, or to repress them, it will be necessary to limit the right of suffrage, and confine it to the larger property-holders. Here will be another invidious point of contrast between the United States and the secession confederacy. The poor man will recollect that in the former, so far as individual influence affected the national destiny through the ballot-box, his suffrage was as potential as that of the most favored son of fortune. He will remember how his influence was courted in the popular forum; how his individuality was felt by himself and recognised by others. To be deprived of such a privilege—to be denied the power of bestowing or holding political station—will sink him in his own estimation, and reduce him to the level of a feudal serf. Goaded to desperation by importunate tax-gatherers, and bereft of the first attributes of an American freeman, he will not remain in a country where every day he grows poorer, and is exposed to new vexations and insults. Tempted by the cheap lands of the West, the promising future that is held out to every one under the United States Government, and by the dignity and equality of its citizenship, he will gather his family around him, and again seek shelter beneath the Government of his forefathers. We shall see a continual exodus of the poor white population from the Southern confederacy into the United States territory, if its political institutions shall be what its projectors design them to be. With no incoming tide of emigration to supply the waste of this outward movement, how rapidly and surely must the secession States decline in power, prosperity, wealth, and consequence!

Why, then, venture on such a dangerous experiment? [They want a stronger government, said Mr. NELSON, of Tennessee.] "A stronger government," says my eloquent and Union-loving friend from Tennessee. What stronger Government can they desire than one which rests on the popular affections, which is controlled by the popular will, and lives and moves for the well-being of the people, to whose breath it owes all its vitality? There can be no stronger Government than that of the United States, unless it be one that is founded on brute force. Our's is based on public opinion, which can fashion it to its own purposes, and which, it is to be presumed, having such a foundation, can never be perverted to the general injury. It has stood firm and unshaken amid the political tempests which have swept, like an Asiatic typhoon, over the Old World, uprooting the most ancient and solid political structures. Public

opinion has fluctuated like the waves of the sea, changing, from time to time, its policy, but never varying as to the duty and necessity of maintaining it unimpaired in its primitive vigor. Political parties have risen and fallen, and fierce has been the strife for power and place between them; but the Constitution has stood, like a solid column, immovable on its deep-set base. There are those who, uninstructed by the lessons of history, still persist in the opinion that mankind are more effectually controlled by brute force than by moral force. It may be that the founders of the projected government in the cotton States are of this class; and it would seem ha they are, to judge them by their sneers on the weakness of the Federal Government.

They are disgusted with the vulgarity of a Government over which the *profanum vulgus* have an equal control with the more wealthy and refined. Its simplicity is significant of imbecility, rather than of strength to these political empirics. Their idea of political power is represented by physical force—by bayonets, standing armies, and by all the pomp and circumstance of military parade that surrounds the thrones of Europe. Their nostrils are offended by too near a contact with the democratic masses, and they sigh for the divinity that hedges a king; for a condition of things in which the many shall be subject to the rule of the few; in which the masses shall be the soft, easy cushions on which political sluggards and knaves may repose and fatten. Do they lay the flattering unction to their souls that a people bred up under the perfect freedom of the American Constitution to a sense of political equality, and to the unrammelled use of their moral faculties, can ever be persuaded or forced into such a system of Government, so directly in conflict with the spirit of republican institutions? Never, never, sir, will a people, who have once enjoyed liberty in all the plenitude that we possess it, willingly part with it; or, having been inveigled into its surrender for a time, long remain passive beneath the iron heel of demagogic despotism? None appreciate liberty so keenly as they who, having once possessed it, have lost it. None cherish the bleared light of day with such rapturous zest as those whose orbs, once refulgent with its vivifying beams, have been sealed in darkness. A Government, founded in fear of the people, in this age, and in this hemisphere, will have a short lived duration. The popular mass may be buried beneath the superincumbent weight of despotic oligarchy; but, like the fabled giant Enceladus beneath the Sicilian mountain, its struggling throes will shake the world to its centre by its convulsive movements for liberty.

Fear of the people, Mr. Speaker, is the first sign of a despotic temper. And has not this cowardly passion already exhibited itself in a most striking manner in the conduct of the secession leaders? They have not dared, in a single instance, to submit their ordinances of secession to the judgment of the sovereign people. They either insolently defy the popular will, or they justly fear that the people, possessing more loyalty than themselves to the Union, would chastise their usurped authority with signal condemnation. They set themselves above the people; they presume to dictate to them, and to impose on them such a form of government as they choose. If they can establish, of their own free will, any political system, as they seem to think, without consultation with the people on whom it is imposed, they can create a despotism or monarchy as well as a bastard republic. How does all this timid shrinking from public censure contrast with the action of the wise and great men who framed the Constitution of the United States? They believed that government, being instituted for the benefit of the many, should be sanctioned by their approval. They regarded themselves merely as the agents for the people, acting in their behalf and for their interests, and they deemed their work incomplete until crowned with the popular sanction. The overthrow of such a Government, with such an origin, is treason against the whole

body of the people. The overthrow of a secession government, never ratified by the people, and established in defiance of the popular will, is a righteous revolution, and reclamation of the usurped rights and sovereignty of the people. A government so instituted has no firm foundation, because it is an usurpation of the legitimate authority. Unstable as the sand, unsubstantial as the palaces, domes, and turrets of the Fata Morgana in the Sicilian straits, it will dissolve like a vision, or be swept away before the first gust of popular passion.

Among the strange notions of the day, Mr. Speaker, that of the superior claims of a State to the allegiance of its citizens over the Federal Government is—if there can be any superlative among these rival absurdities—the most extraordinary. It is lamentable to witness the facility with which men of honor, who, as a condition of entering on the public service, have taken an oath to the Constitution and laws of the United States as the paramount authority of the land, can coolly and deliberately violate their sworn obligations. If the Federal Government can thus readily be betrayed to domestic enemies, can its defence against a foreign foe, or fidelity to it in the hour of external danger, be expected from such disloyal servants? The times are indeed out of joint, when men of honorable calling and reputation can thus forswear themselves, and, under the very eaves of the Capitol, can join in secret league with State conspirators for the destruction of the National Government. For my part, sir, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I renounce all such heresies. Having taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States, I intend to observe it. If the State which I have the honor in part to represent should set herself in treasonable array against the Federal authority, I shall stand by the latter. If she should vote herself out of the Union, I shall not go with her, but I will cling to the Union to the last. Proud as I am of my birthright as a Pennsylvanian, I am yet prouder of my title of an American citizen. American citizenship clothes me with the panoply of this great Government wherever I go, and it is my duty to defend the power that covers me with its shield. The nation is represented by the Federal Government, and when it is assailed, our life as a people is at stake. Above all other questions, that of the preservation of our nationality rises pre-eminent. No State pretensions should be allowed to come in conflict with a mighty interest like this, that concerns the whole people—that is so closely connected with the political welfare of the world at large.

If, sir, any one has a right to be proud of his native State, a Pennsylvanian surely has. No State in the Union possesses more of the requisites for independent existence than Pennsylvania. Seated between two great rivers, one of which gives easy access to the Atlantic and to intercourse with the Old World, and the other washing the shores of the great States of the West and South, and interlocking with the watercourses, whose navigable tides penetrate the innermost heart of the continent, she enjoys the most admirable facilities for trade and commerce. Within her mountain ranges lie imbedded inexhaustible deposits of coal and iron, of far greater value to her than the "wealth of Ormus and of Ind," and which will ever make other parts of the country dependent on her. Their slopes and summits are covered with all the chief varieties of useful timber; and the valleys which lie among them, and the broad plains that stretch away from their feet, yield abundant crops of the grains which furnish the staple food of man. A healthy and vigorating climate nourishes a brave and enterprising people, made up of the best races of Europe, who have contributed much to the common glory of the nation by their discoveries in the arts and sciences, their valor in the field, and their statesmanship in the Cabinet. Favored, as she is, by Heaven in all that makes up the greatness of a State, Pennsylvania, sir, will yet never desert the Union. With its maintenance, her own prosperity is inseparably linked. It

binds her in chains of love with sister States, with whose destiny her own is intertwined. She regards the Constitution as a guardian genius, whose eye never slumbers, and which is ever watchful to promote the welfare and defend the security of all whose interests it has in keeping. She will pour out her last drop of blood in its defence, and exhaust all her resources to maintain it against a world in arms. Let other States court eternal infamy by conspiring its destruction; she will prove anew her loyalty to the motto of her shield, "Virtue, liberty, and independence," by rallying around it with her brawny sons of labor, and defending it to the last, in the darkest hour of its peril.

Disposed as I am, sir, to do all that in honor I can do to remove the present troubles, and to guard against their recurrence, I must confess that, so long as the right of secession is maintained, I shall have but little faith in the stability or duration of the National Government. Already it has demoralized our standing as a people, and, from being one of the most powerful, we are now among the weakest of nations. A nation that has no coherence among its component parts, that may at any moment be torn asunder by internal dissensions, or be dissolved by the withdrawal of any of its members, cannot be said to have a permanent or self-sustaining existence. Other nations will have but little confidence in such a Government, and will be chary of entering into treaties of reciprocal obligations and benefits with it; not having, as they cannot have, any pledge that the nationality with which they have negotiated will be maintained. This right must be abandoned, as unwarranted by the Constitution, and at war with the best interests of the country, or we shall be as constant a prey to revolutions as the distracted republics of South America.

Look at our position before this fatal right of secession was asserted, and compare it with what it is now. With a smaller navy than any of the great Powers, our flag challenged for the vessels it covered as much respect as that of England or France. Power, a keen sensitiveness to wrong, and promptness in seeking redress, were the ideas associated with the Republic of the United States. Unanimity of popular sentiment accompanied the action of the Government, and a wrong to an individual American was regarded as an injury that every citizen of the nation would feel and resent. Provocation to such a people was eagerly avoided and justly dreaded. But, sir, I fear that this enforced respect is gone, and that we have lost, or will soon lose, if the right of secession becomes a fixed article in our political creed, the *prestige* that has hitherto surrounded the brow of this young nation. Such has been the blighting effect of secession on our national reputation, that it may be said of the Republic, as Antony said of Cæsar, in his funeral oration in the forum:

> "But yesterday, the word of Cæsar might
> Have stood against the world; now lies he there,
> And none so poor to do him reverence."

The opinion of the framers of the Constitution on this anarchial doctrine is clearly given in the reply of Mr. Madison to the letter of Alexander Hamilton, dated Poughkeepsie, July 1788, announcing the proposal of New York to join the Union for five or six years, with the right then to withdraw, if she desired. Mr. Hamilton says:

"You will understand that the only qualification will be the reservation of a right to secede, in case our amendments have not been decided upon, in one of the modes pointed out by the Constitution, within a certain number of years, perhaps five or seven. If this can, in the first instance, be admitted as a ratification, I do not fear any further consequences. Congress will, I presume, recommend certain amendments to render the structure of the Government more secure. This will satisfy the more considerate and honest opposers of the Constitution, and with the aid of them will break up the party."

Mr. Madison's reply was:

NEW YORK *Sunday evening.*

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of yesterday is this instant at hand, and I have but a few minutes to answer it. I am sorry that your situation obliges you to listen to propositions of the nature you describe. My opinion is, that a reservation of a right to withdraw, if amendments be not decided on under the form of the Constitution within a certain time, is a conditional ratification; that it does not make New York a member of the new Union, and, consequently, that she should not be received on that plan. Compacts must be reciprocal; this principle would not, in such case, be preserved. The Constitution requires an adoption *in toto* and forever. It has been so adopted by the other States. An adoption for a limited time would be as defective as an adoption of some of the articles only. In short, any condition whatever must vitiate the ratification. What the new Congress, by virtue of the power to admit new States, may be able and disposed to do in such a case, I do not inquire; and I suppose that is not the material point at present. I have not a moment to add more than my fervent wishes for your success and happiness. The idea of reserving the right to withdraw was started at Richmond, and considered as a conditional ratification, which was itself abandoned—worse than rejection. Yours, JAMES MADISON.

New York abandoned her claim, and adopted the Constitution *in toto* and forever, as did the other States.

If the right of secession is found to be indefensible, the right of revolution is asserted. Certainly, that right can no more be denied than the right of self defence; but it can only be exercised as a last resort in a case of clear necessity, and when every effort has been exhausted to obtain a redress of grievances. Can any State now justify its resort to this primitive right? South Carolina and her colleagues of the cotton States secede from the Union, not from any wrong done them by the Federal Government, but from apprehensions of aggression on the rights of the slaveholding States by the incoming Administration, and because of certain laws of some of the free States, which, it is alleged, were enacted for the purpose of nullifying the fugitive slave law. The answer to the latter branch of this charge is, that these laws were passed for the purpose of preventing the kidnapping of free negroes, and that they have never been applied to the obstruction of the operation of the fugitive slave law. So far as execution goes, they are a dead letter; and if they be unconstitutional, as it is said they are, any attempt to put them in force would immediately present a case for decision on that point in the Federal courts. So long as the Supreme Court of the United States exists as an arbiter between the States and the legislation of the Federal Government, no State is justifiable in resorting to revolution until it has carried its grievances, arising out of hostile State legislation, before that tribunal, and has failed to obtain the redress to which it is entitled. Strange to say, sir, the constitutionality of these laws has never yet been called in question before this high court of judicature by even South Carolina herself, the most clamorous of the seceding States, and the one which vindicates its lawless action by the so-called personal liberty laws.

If this pretext for revolution or secession, as the case may be, fails to be satisfactory, it is asserted that the free and slave States can no longer live together in the same Union; because the people of the former entertain an inveterate hostility to the institution of slavery, and strong prejudices against slaveholders. It is undoubtedly true that the people of the free States are opposed to the extension of slavery; and they are not singular in this. Some of the greatest statesmen of the South—such as Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Madison, and Clay—held the same views. We have, however, sir, thus far lived in peace together, as free and slave States, for three quarters of a century; and I know no reason why we cannot continue to do so. The personal prejudices which are said to exist have no foundation in fact, except on the part of zealots, who would be as

implacable on any other fixed idea as on the subject of slavery. To say that any considerable body of the people of the North claim to have a constitutional right to interfere with slavery in the States, is to assert what is not true. No such pretensions have ever been advanced in Congress, and no such right is known to exist under the Constitution. The people of the South have no more reason to fear an interference with slavery in the States by Congress than they have to fear an invasion of Mongolian Tartars from the steppes of Asia.

The future historian will be puzzled to find any rational cause for the dissolution of the Union in the reasons generally assigned, and he will rightfully conclude that it was the result of a deep-laid and long-devised conspiracy. The chief conspirator he will find to be the State of South Carolina, which, under the inspiration of its great sectional statesman, Mr. Calhoun, was for a quarter of a century affected with a chronic hostility to the Union. Failing to break it up in 1832, on the cry of an oppressive tariff, and owing to the vigorous conduct of General Jackson in putting down the nascent rebellion of that time, a new pretext for treasonable warfare against its duration was started on the slavery question. Mr. Benton, in his examination of the Dred Scott case, says:

"On his returning home from Congress, Mr. Calhoun told his friends that the South could never be united against the North on the tariff question; that the sugar interest of Louisiana would keep her out, and that the basis of Southern Union must be shifted to the slave question; and shifted accordingly it immediately was. Incontinently, all the nullification newspapers opened for secession for that new cause, filling the country with alarm for the safety of slave property, and spreading the terrors of servile insurrection—inevitable consequences of abolition designs."

This outcry has been continued to the present day, and Congress has been made the arena of the most passionate appeals to the prejudices of the people of the South against the North; of the most unfounded charges, time and again refuted as the coinage of distempered brains, or as the falsifications of designing and desperate demagogues, whose real aim was to embroil the North and South in a war of sections, and thus promote the unholy and wicked purposes of the enemies of the Union and American liberty.

That conspiracy has now culminated, and South Carolina rejoices, while the edifice of the Union is in flames, with all its altars dedicated to liberty, and its rich repository of moral and political knowledge put in peril of being scattered to the winds, like the treasures of the Alexandrine library. The Goths and Vandals raised not a wilder and more exulting shout over the ruins of imperial Rome than the South Carolina conspirators over the prospect of dissolution and ruin of the American Union. Nero, fiddling while Rome was burning, is a type of the men who exult at a yet more destructive conflagration, in which a world's hopes will be consumed. Says Mr. Rhett, in the South Carolina convention:

"The secession of South Carolina is not an event of a day. It is not anything produced by Mr. Lincoln's election, or by the non-execution of the fugitive slave law. It has been a matter which has been gathering head for thirty years."

In the same body the following remarks of a like tenor were made:

"Mr. Parker. Mr. President, it appears to me, with great deference to the opinions that have been expressed, that the public mind is fully made up to the great occasion that now awaits us. It is no spasmodic effort that has come suddenly upon us, but it has been gradually culminating for a long series of years, and at last it has come to that point when we may say the matter is entirely right.

"Mr. Inglis. Mr. President, if there is any gentleman present who wishes to debate this matter, of course this body will hear him; but as to delay for the purpose of a discussion, I, for one, I am opposed to it. As my friend [Mr. Parker]

has said, most of us have had this matter under consideration for the last twenty years, and I presume we have by this time arrived at a decision upon the subject.

"Mr. KEITT. Sir, we are performing a great act, which involves not only the stirrin present, but embraces the whole great future of ages to come. I have been engaged in this movement ever since I entered political life. I am content with what has been done to-day, and content with what will take place to-morrow. We have carried the body of this Union to its last resting-place, and now we will drop the flag over its grave. After that is done, I am ready to adjourn, and leave the remaining ceremonies for to-morrow."

All these declarations go to show that an organized conspiracy has existed for more than twenty years in South Carolina to dissolve the Union, and that the modern pretexts are mere shams. Is it possible, Mr. Speaker, that the mother of States—Virginia—can be made an instrument of South Carolina in carrying out her criminal designs against the Union? Will the land of Clay and Jackson, and the patriotic State of North Carolina, consent to play a secondary part to South Carolina, and be driven by her into a war against the Union? I cannot believe it, sir. Treason has never found a congenial soil in the patriotic States of Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, and I fervently hope it never may. It is in their power to stem the tide of rebellion, and, like an insurmountable barrier, to turn it back to its fountain-head, and thus arrest its ravages on the peace and prosperity of the country.

As I said, sir, in the outset of my remarks, I am willing to vote for any honorable plan of settlement. I do not think the Crittenden propositions, as they now stand, have any chance of adoption by Congress; but I will cheerfully vote to refer them to the people, and abide their decision. The border State plan is less objectionable, and, if I understand it aright, I can vote for it without any compromise of principle. For the propositions of the committee of thirty-three I shall vote with great pleasure; and it seems to me they ought to satisfy every reasonable man. The admission of New Mexico as a State, as proposed, will introduce into the Union all the territory south of 36° 30′, and which is at all adapted to slave labor. That slavery will be established there I doubt, as the climate and products of that Territory do not require slave labor for the development of its scanty resources. When New Mexico is admitted as a State, we shall be rid of the slavery question, so far as it depends on the present territory of the United States, and there will be, I trust, a lasting peace on that troublesome question.

Should all other propositions fail, I will bring forward the following, as an amendment to the Constitution:

"Neither Congress nor a Territorial Legislature shall make any law respecting involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime; but Congress may pass laws for the suppression of the African slave trade, and for the rendition of fugitives from labor or service in the States."

The object of this amendment would be to forever banish the question of slavery from congressional or territorial legislation. The history of the legislation of Congress on this subject is a history of fruitless agitation; and it has of late become evident that it cannot legislate upon slavery to a finality, or without endangering the tranquillity and union of the States. The Missouri compromise, established as a bond of peace between the North and South in 1820, was repealed in 1854; and since that time the attention of Congress has for the most part been occupied with irritating and unprofitable discussions on the slavery question. I have faith in the people. We cannot overrule their predetermined will, and if they wish slavery we cannot prevent them from tolerating it in the constitution of a new State, and we cannot oblige them to exclude it. It is agreed on all sides that we have no right to reject the application of a State for admission to the Union, because of its domestic

institutions; and even if we had, when the State is admitted its people can modify their constitution according to their own liking. As we cannot force slavery upon a people of a State who do not desire it, nor deprive them of it if they see fit to tolerate it, all our legislation must be temporary, and confined to the term of territorial probation. Why not dispense with the exercise of the power of prohibition, and take the risk of the popular decision? If the advocates of slavery protection by Federal legislation, and of popular sovereignty in the Territories, will surrender their respective claims, I am willing, by way of compromise, to waive the right to prohibit by Federal legislation, and thus to remand the whole question of slavery back to the popular arbitrament. Such an amendment as I propose, all other plans of compromise failing, would at least pacify the country by expelling the question of slavery from Congress. Under the decision of the Supreme Court, (if it has really made such a decision,) slaveholders have a right to take their slaves into the Territories, and to hold them there until they are ruled out, or admitted by the State constitution. As long as that decision stands, no congressional legislation can invalidate it, and we must, therefore, act accordingly. Such an amendment as that which I propose, Mr. Speaker, would allay all apprehensions of the interference of Congress with slavery in the States, the District of Columbia, &c., as it would deprive Congress of all power over the subject. It is also not obvious to the objections which must always exist against a geographical line of division—that of perpetuating sectional distinctions. I have no desire to press this amendment; but, if a durable peace on the slavery question is desired, I venture to suggest that some such proposition is the only one by which it can be secured. I have every reason to believe that the interests of freedom would not suffer by its adoption; for one, I am willing to hazard the unbiassed judgment of the people on the subject.

I desire to say a few words on the subject of coercion, so called; but my waning hour admonishes me to be brief. The idea of coercion is misrepresented. No one proposes to march the Federal armies into the seceding States, to subjugate them back into the Union. We know that it is utterly impossible to force into submission to the Union a people who are opposed to it. Were such a result achieved, we should only gain a reluctant allegiance from citizens whose loyalty would always be suspected and who would forever bear in their hearts the rancor of humiliated pride. It cannot be done. Such a war would entail a greater expenditure of money than that represented by the national debt of England, and a greater waste of life than that of the Napoleonic campaigns. God forbid that we should ever enter on such a bloody and fruitless strife! That the Government ought to collect the customs revenues so long as the seceded States are not recognised as an independent Power, and that it ought to maintain possession of the more important Federal forts and arsenals, I have no manner of doubt.

Above all, it should not permit the national flag to be dishonored. An insult to the flag by any portion of the American people is as great an outrage as if committed by a foreign enemy. The flag of a nation is the symbol of its honor and power; and the patriotic sensibility of its people is wounded when it is dishonored. That the descendants of Sumter, Marion, and Moultrie should ruthlessly assail the flag which led their brave ancestors to victory, or to a glorious death beneath its constellated folds, is as astonishing as their proscription of the patriotic airs of the Revolution and the war of 1812-'14, for the French Marseillaise. The former comes down to us freighted with recollections of the purest and noblest struggle ever made for liberty; the latter reeks with the bloody fumes of the guillotine, beneath the merciless knife of which fell the beautiful, the virtuous, and the brave, in indis-

criminate slaughter. Is it possible that any portion of the American people prefer the diabolic music with which the protestations of the victims of Danton, Marat, and Robespierre were drowned at the foot of the scaffold of the Reign of Terror to that which inspirited Washington, Greene, Jackson, Stewart, and Decatur, in their struggle for universal liberty, and for the cause of law, order, and religious and civil freedom? Degenerate, indeed, must be the sons of American revolutionary sires, who would supplant their own national music with the imported tunes of the worst era of French licentiousness, infidelity, and mob despotism.

We are told by some that, however disastrous the immediate effects of secession may be, that it is better to assent to it, as we shall thus the more readily promote a reconstruction of the Union. "Reconstruction!" That, Mr. Speaker, is a syren song to lure the unwary on to the rocks of dissolution. The Union once dissolved, no reconstruction will ever take place. We shall become a strange people to each other, with rival interests and hostile feelings; and we shall rather seek the friendship of foreign nations than that of each other. However wise the men of the South may be in their own conceit, they can never construct a government which shall surpass that of Washington, Hamilton, Madison, and Franklin in solidity of strength and grandeur of proportions. The work of the first men of the greatest age of history can hardly be equaled by Cobb, Keitt, Yancey, and their compeers. The Union and Constitution as they are is all that we can desire for ourselves and those who are to come after us. To the Constitution we owe all our individual and national prosperity. It has been to us a pillar of light in the past; and it will be to us in the future a sure pledge of liberty and happiness. We have tried it in weal and woe; and it has never disappointed our hopes. They who vainly imagine that from its ruins they can construct another and better form of government deceive themselves and their credulous followers. The American Constitution is the result of ages of political experiment. Such a fabric cannot be erected in a day, or by ordinary men.

> "A thousand years scarce serve to form a State;
> An hour may lay it in the dust; and when
> Can man its shattered splendors renovate,
> Recall its virtues back, and vanquish time and fate?"

With the fall of the Union and Constitution will close the second great epoch of American history. A future, overcast with clouds of gloomy forboding, will loom beyond. God grant that from its mysterious depths the lurid flames of civil war may not burst forth to consume the monuments of industry and freedom that now cover the land, and to destroy the last vestiges of American liberty and independence! I pray to God that no responsibility for such calamities may rest on me, or on those whose delegated authority I here represent.

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